



CASE STUDY

## KENNEDY SPACE CENTER

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## DALTILE CREATES A FUTURISTIC SPACE FOR GUESTS AT KENNEDY SPACE CENTER VISITOR COMPLEX

Nestled among rocket ships and high-tech shuttle launch simulators is Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex's Astronaut Encounter Theater. Once through the doors of the building, the renovated lobby and theater transport guests to an area that resembles a space ship, complete with astronauts.

Originally built in the 1970s, the Astronaut Encounter Theater has played a vital role in educating visitors. This exciting presentation features a veteran NASA astronaut each day, providing them with a stage to share a first-hand account of their missions and experiences. Guests gather in the theater where the astronaut of the day provides a presentation about their experience, followed by a question and answer session. The lobby serves as a meet-and-greet area, where guests can take pictures with the astronaut.



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Prior to the renovation, both the lobby and theater needed updating. Working with designer, Michael Rainey, of Design Shop and its team, the new building design was inspired by the rich history of Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex and its ongoing drive for innovation. Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex hoped to create a design that was functional and durable, all while presenting a space that provides a dazzling backdrop for astronauts to take photos with guests.

Even though the renovation seemed simple, the project was limited to a tight window of time. Slated for early November, Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex requested to have the renovation finished prior to the holiday rush, which begins in late November. Because of the firm completion date, the renovation team worked on an eight-day schedule to complete demos, preparations, and installation. Kicking off on November 8, the team removed the vinyl tile from the lobby areas and created a blank canvas to create a futuristic look.

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While the actual theater was limited in its design, the architectural team was able to be creative with the lobby area, creating a space that would be ideal for guest photos. The focus of the lobby design was the flooring, which was designed using hexagon-shaped tile and LED lighting. Based on the renderings, Rainey sought carpeting and hexagonal tile that would bring the perfect balance of drama and neutrality to the active foyer. To select the appropriate tile, Rainey worked with Bob Moore of Mr. David's Flooring International, LLC.

"The lobby was intended to look high tech with the LED lighting mimicking the inside of electronic devices," said Rainey. "We decided to use Daltile's Bee Hive™ hexagon porcelain tile, knowing that it would be a reliable and withstand the test of time. We added the LED lighting alongside the tile to create a futuristic element."

Due to the durability and low maintenance benefits of tile, it was decided to switch from vinyl to ceramic tile, particularly with the lobby being such a high-traffic area, seeing over a million visitors each year. Daltile was selected based on prior experience – the team knew that Daltile had a tile that could bring the design vision to reality.

This subtle yet dramatic tile design complemented the network of LED lights that were installed into the floor surface. To install the LED lights into the flooring, the project members worked with a team of engineers. In order to integrate the light into the tile, every light on the channel had to be intricately cut, manipulated, and soldered to each side of the hexagonal tile. "We had to be very precise with how we cut the lights, as well as the tile, to ensure that the design could be brought to life. The end result was spectacular," added Moore.

In the theater area, the project team removed the wall panels and replaced them with wall carpeting. The carpets of the theater floor, stage and green rooms were also replaced, updating the areas with a neutral carpet tile to place emphasis on the painted ceiling and stage area. The simple updates to the theatre, in addition to the overhaul of the lobby area, revamped the entire space, providing a modern area for guests to enjoy.

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The project was completed on November 15, 2015 – just in time for the holiday rush. With the new design, the theater reflects the modern aesthetic of the surrounding technology and innovations. The new space offers the perfect location to meet an astronaut. Additionally, the Daltilo Bee Hive tile provided the ideal solution for the high-traffic area.

Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex was pleased with the final result, combining function and space-age design. The Daltilo Bee Hive tile provided the ideal solution for the design, ensuring that the flooring will withstand the thousands of guests that will visit the Astronaut Encounter Theater for years to come.



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